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## CREATION, DEVELOPMENT AND PERSPECTIVES OF NURSING EDUCATION IN BULGARIA

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**Abstract:** Nurses are one of the most needed medical professionals who have an important role in the prevention, treatment and recovery of patients.

The literature review traces the stages in the creation, development and prospects of nursing education in Bulgaria.

The development of nursing in Bulgaria began after the Liberation and the declaration of independence of the country in 1878. The training of nurses, who were initially called charity nurses, was carried out in courses at the initiative of the Bulgarian Red Cross in 1894.

This study analyzes the training of nurses through the different stages and changes after Bulgaria's accession to the European Union.

The first European Conference on Nursing was held in Vienna in 1988. Outlined were the major guidelines for nurses and midwives profession throughout Europe and recommendations and policies affecting nurses' role and training were formulated. Made was an important decision for reorientation of training and practice in order to address more effectively the changing tasks of health systems and objectives according to the WHO conception "Health for all" (WHO, 1984). Emphasized was on the need nurses to be partners in decisions on planning and management of local, regional and national healthcare services.

The Council of Europe Conference on Higher Education and Research in Strasbourg summarizes the necessary changes to the national legislation of the countries to incorporate the principles of the Lisbon Strategy and the Bologna Process. On September 7, 2005 the Council Directive 2005/36 / EC of the Council of the European Parliament on the recognition of the professional qualifications of nurses has been adopted: the curriculum for the training of nurses in the Member States and the list of evidence of the professional qualifications of nurses in the Member States. The Directive lays down rules on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications.

These reforms aim to prepare more and more qualified personnel for the successful implementation of the health reform in Bulgaria and to respond to the increased demands of the society for qualified and quality healthcare.

**Keywords:** nurses, training development, perspectives

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of sisterhood in Bulgaria started after the liberation of the country from Turkish occupation in 1878. The training of nurses, who initially were called "sisters of charity", is done in courses initiated by the Bulgarian Red Cross in 1894. The first school for nurses in Bulgaria was founded in 1900. Queen Eleanor, the wife of King Ferdinand established many hospitals, nursing schools, children's homes. She graduated, worked as a nurse and organizes the nurse's training. She invited in Bulgaria two American nurses Rahila Torrance and Theodora Le Gro, who updated the training. The Queen was buried, in her desire, in her nurse uniform. The nurse training lasted two years, later one-year internship became mandatory and so it became three years long.

In the country there was also Russian influence. Bulgaria was liberated as a result of a Russian - Turkish war. In this war participated besides Russian doctors' also 2,000 Russian nurses. (Апостолов, 2006).

After 1950 the foundations of a Soviet model socialist healthcare was laid. Training was two-years long and the graduate nurses were with a secondary education, which was obtained with the graduation of school.

In the 70-s and 80-ies of XX century in Bulgaria were established 14 schools that train nurses.

During the years of socialism the nurses training passed through many changes. Till 1975 in the country existed "United medical schools", in which after two years of training nurses graduated with a secondary medical education.

Later with a government decision the so called half higher medical education for nurses was regulated in order to increase the prestige of the profession. The training period was 2,5 years with a total number of 3024 training hours.

The enrollment happened after passing a written exam in biology. For one place competed up to 10 students. In 1982 again the secondary special medical education was reintroduced and a workload of 2391 hours. Due to the ever increasing need for more nurses the opportunity was given in the last two years of the studies in the secondary education to study parallel two years in a professional training complex with 2659 hours.

The Ministries of Educational and health found out that this training was not enough efficient and in the year 1990 returned the half higher education in the so-called half higher institutes. At that time, for directors and managers of these schools were appointed doctors according to the Soviet model. In Europe most nursing schools are run by nurses from the time of Florence Nightingale.

The first European Conference on Nursing was held in Vienna in 1988. Outlined were the major guidelines for nurses and midwives profession throughout Europe and recommendations and policies affecting nurses' role and training were formulated. Made was an important decision for reorientation of training and practice in order to address more effectively the changing tasks of health systems and objectives according to the WHO conception "Health for all" (WHO, 1984). Emphasized was on the need nurses to be partners in decisions on planning and management of local, regional and national healthcare services. The increase in the need for high quality nursing care for achieving better health received full recognition. In this connection in 1995 the half higher medical institutes were transformed in medical colleges. The changes are:

- Increasing the duration of training and the overall workload.
- Harmonized are the curricula with the international standards and criteria of the International Council of Nurses;
- Changed was the learning content by focusing on health prevention and promotion, on protection the health of the healthy person, on realizing the interdisciplinary link between humanitarian, social and clinical disciplines and development of communication skills;
- Introduction of new disciplines - informatics, family planning, nutrition, health promotion, sociology, etc.;
- Introduction of new topics such as "Nursing diagnosis and nursing dossier", "Developing a plan for nursing care" and others.
- Placing the students at the center of the learning process - this is one of the characteristics of modern medical education, which defines ever more the limited share of lectures as a learning form, and impose more flexible forms - practical seminars, discussions, laboratory classes and more.

Increase of the number of hours of clinical training. (Александрова, 2019)

The enrollment of students in established medical colleges is performed after graduation the secondary education and a competitive exam in biology. The rating is formed on the basis of high school diploma marks in biology and chemistry and the doubled assessment mark of the competitive examination in biology. The training period is three years - 6 semesters. Upon graduation, students receive a degree "specialist" of the specialty "nurse" or "midwife". In 1999 Bulgaria was among the 29 countries that signed the Bologna Declaration. The outlined goals must be met by 2010 and are related to:

Adopting an intelligible and comparable higher education system, supported by the introduction of the Diploma Supplement with the aim to increase the chances of finding work in Europe and for enhancement the competitiveness of European higher education;

Adoption of a system of education based on two main cycles. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of the first cycle;

Introduction of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for better student mobility.

Enhancement of mobility through overcoming obstacles to the free movement of persons.

Enhancement of cooperation in the field of quality assessment by developing comparable criteria and methodologies.

Enhancement the European dimension in higher education and in particular in developing of curricula, mobility schemes and integrated programs for education and training. (Чанева, 2015)

The strength of the Bologna process is in the voluntary cooperation and in the diverse development of a national scale of uniform principles of the system, called the European Higher Education Area.

The basic principles for the construction of the basic training in nursing and midwifery outlined in the European Strategy are:

- Admission to the schools for nurses and midwives should be made on the basis of a graduated secondary education, the candidates have the same qualifications as required in the country for admission to university.
- The program duration should be sufficient to achieve a certain competence and must not be less than three years;
- The curriculum should be based on science, practice and competence;
- EU Directives for nursing and midwifery should be regarded as a minimum basis (they are periodically reviewed and updated based on surveys);
- The initial training and qualification should serve as a basis for continuous professional training and development;
- The main training subject should be theory and practice of nursing and midwifery and so on.

Directives of the Council of the European Communities are periodically reviewed, complement and enriched on the base on the monitoring and analysis of the reforms carried out so far. In recent directives is written:

- The curriculum should have a duration of at least three academic years and 4600 hours of theoretical and clinical training;
- The institution charged with training nurses should be responsible for the coordination of theoretical and clinical training within the overall curriculum. (Наредба за ЕДИ, 2005)

Sisterhood in Bulgaria is constantly striving to reach European standards in training "nurses" and "midwives" set out in directives of EI of WHO in 1998 and 2000.

In 1994 in a PHARE Project with the help of French and Belgian consultants an operational strategy was carried out in three areas:

- Reform of the basic training, which corresponds to EU standards and requirements and the needs in Bulgaria;
- Developing continuous training, career development and specializations;
- Organization of trainings for executives and their legal regulation;

In the country at that time worked 88 387 health professionals, of which 53 810 were nurses.

In 1995 was opened the Faculty of "Nursing" at the Medical University - Sofia, with the specialty "Management of health care". Students graduating this specialty receive qualification "Manager of health care" and "Teacher in practice."

Later the specialty "Health Care Management" was founded in Pleven, Plovdiv, Varna and Stara Zagora. The Project secured the study in France and Belgium of two groups of 6 teachers, some of whom later became assistant-professors. In 2001 the Faculty "Nursing" was transformed into the Faculty of Public Health. Then began the training in Master's nursing programs. (Стамболова, 2015)

For the realization of the reforms was conducted another European project "Tempus" for the development of specializations of nurses as "Pediatric nurses", "Operation nurses", "Anesthetic nurses", "Psychiatric nurses", "Public health nurses" and others. Changes continued with the entry of Bulgaria as a full member in the European Union in 2007. The nursing profession is one of the regulated professions. Regulated profession is an activity or a combination of activities:

- ✓ included in the list of regulated professions in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- ✓ of public importance and / or is essential for life and the human health;
- ✓ exercise of which is determined by laws, regulations or administrative provisions for the possession of specific professional qualifications, competence or membership in a recognized by the state professional organization.

By decree of the Council of Ministers in 2005 an Ordinance on uniform state requirements for acquiring higher education in the specialties "Nurse" and "Midwife" to a degree "Bachelor" is adopted. The new USR are compulsory for all universities and regulate the training of nurses and midwives in faculties and / or affiliates of universities accredited under the Higher Education Act. Training in the specialty "Nurse" for the degree "Bachelor" takes four years and workload of at least 4600 hours. (Стамболова, 2015)

Created was also a system of credit transfer. With this was achieved convertibility of diplomas of Bulgarian nurses and midwives with those in member countries of the European Union.

As a result of these changes the nurses were awarded to continue their education and receive the scientific and educational degree "Doctor". Then appeared the first habilitated nurses and midwives and the profession was put at a higher academic level.

These reforms are intended to prepare more highly qualified personnel for the successful implementation of health reform in our country and to meet the increased requirements of society for skilled and quality health care.

The Conference of the Council of Europe for Higher Education and Research in Strasbourg summarizes the necessary changes in the national legislation of the countries in order to incorporate the principles of the Lisbon agenda and the Bologna process. Global partnership and cooperation require learning outcomes to take into account the main objectives of higher education and continuous training:

1. Preparation for the labor market;
2. Preparation for life as citizens;
3. Development of Personality
4. Develop and support of thorough and advanced professional knowledge.

On the 7-th of September 2005 was adopted the Directive 2005/36 / EO of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications of nurses: Defined were:

- a) curriculum for training of nurses in the Member States;
- b) the list of evidence of formal qualifications of nurses in the Member States;

The Directive lays down rules on mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the EU, the EEA countries outside the EU and Switzerland.

Now the enrollment of students in medical universities and medical colleges is performed after graduation of secondary education of 12 years and a competitive exam, which is different for different specialties. Each university is deciding the kind of the competitive examination for nurses. At our university the exam is in two parts - a test and discussion on important social and ethical issues. Degree "Bachelor" is acquired with a minimum of 240 credits and four years training. Degree "Master" is obtained after the degree "Bachelor" and 60 credits. The training in the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" is in three forms - regular, part-time and self-study. The regular duration is three years and four years in the self-study form. Students are evaluated on the six-level system. The highest grade is "excellent" 6 and the lowest positive assessment mark is "medium" 3. The training of nurses graduates with 4 state exams before a State Board of Examiners of habilitated lecturers.

The Directive was amended by Directive 2013/55/EC (applicable to EU countries from January 18, 2016), which foresees the creation of a European Professional Card (EPC). This will enable interested citizens to obtain recognition of their qualifications easier and faster through standardized electronic procedure. The card will be based on the use of information system of internal market (IMI) and will be issued in the form of an electronic certificate. EPC will be implemented for the first wave of nurses responsible for general care and other professions.

## 2. CONCLUSION

Now Bulgaria has 30,589 working nurses, which is very insufficient. Because of the synchronization of the training of nurses in Bulgaria and opportunities to move and work in the EU more and more professionals are leaving the country. In the country many healthcare facilities have vacancies for nurses. This requires a new strategy for the development of health care in Bulgaria, which has to be developed by the experts on this issue. There is no doubt that the main motivating factor for retention of quality professional career is the payment of their work and the public prestige of the profession. Necessary is a comprehensive conceptual change in the model of financing.

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